Sermon Preached at the N. S. Western Association.

BY REV. W. H. RICHAN.

But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.—Heb. 13-16.

In the previous verse we are exhorted to offer the sacrifice of praise even the fruit of our lips. This is a reasonable service and acceptable to God. He has conferred upon us the gift of speech that our mouths may show forth his praise. But it is not enough to serve in word and in tongue, our love to God and our race must be manifested in deed and in truth. "To do good and to communicate forget not" (as though there were a proneness to forget these things) "for with such sacrifice God is well pleased." The word sacrifice often conveys the idea of an atonement or propitiation offered by a worshipper to appease the wrath or gain the favor of the being to whom it is presented. But there is no such idea connected with the word as used here. We may not come to God thinking that by our beggarly gift we can atone for one of a thousand of our transgressions, or with a price in our hands with which to purchase the Divine favor. Such an offering however costly to us would be an abomination in the sight of the Lord. Christ has made a sufficient atonement for our guilt and offers freely all the treasures of his grace, so that in so far as my acceptance with God, the obtaining of eternal redemption from sin and misery, and a title to the heavenly inheritance are concerned, I may sing "Nothing in my hands I bring." But the word as here used signifies an offering of grateful acknowledgement, or an expression of love and gratitude and it conveys the idea of costliness or giving which requires self denial.

The verb "to communicate" means to give. The corresponding noun is used in 2 Cor. 9: 13 and is then rendered "distribution," and again in Rom. 15: 26 where it is rendered "contribution." In both these places it refers to the monies raised by the churches to aid the poor saints at Jerusalem. I therefore deduce from my text as a theme for our present consideration, the Christian duty of Liberality. The apostle Paul emphasized very strongly the doctrine of justification by faith with the deeds of the law, and at the same time no sacred writer lays greater stress upon the observance of the practical duties of religion. While we rejoice in the gospel of free grace announced in Eph. 2: 8-9 "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselve; it is the gift of God; Not of works lest any man should boast," we can find no contradiction or inconsistency in the corrective statement of James who says Jas. 2: 20 "But wilt thou know, oh vain man, that faith without works is dead," and again in verse 18 "A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." Of all the works enjoined upon the Christian none is more clearly set forth or more strongly enforced than that of liberality.

Selfishness is diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Bible. We need not be suprised if in an ungodly world we find each looking out for his own interests regardless of the welfare of his fellow-man, but the word of God inculcates a very different principle of action. The first commandment is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength," and the second is like unto it "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is a lawyer's exposition of the law sanctioned by our Lord, but the requirements of the gospel are no less exacting. The apostle Paul in Rom. 15: 2 thus exhorts us, "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification," and in his Epistle to the the Philippians, chapter 2: 3-4 he seems to go even beyond the letter of the law when he says "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Whatever may be our short comings in reference to this grand principle of the Christian religion, we must admit that this was "mind that was in Christ Jesus," and we also know that the apostle himself to a greater extent probably than any of us, practiced what he preached. But let us consider in detail a few reasons for the practice of Liberality.

I. Nature teaches it. Everywhere throughout the natural world beneficence is manifested. The sun diffuses his light and heat throughout the solar system. He shines alike on the evil and good, freely bestowing precious blessings upon millions in every daily round. The atmosphere embraces every mortal liberality imparting that without which no man could live a moment. The rain descends upon the just and the unjust, watering the earth and causing it to bring forth food for man and beast. Flowers exhale their perfume and exhibit their beauty, imparting pleasure to all around, and all these are saying to us in unmistakable language, "To do good and to commemorate forget not."

II. Scripture teaches it. Under the old Testament dispensation the Jews were required to give largely, and in their seasons of religious prosperity they gave far more than the law demanded. But in a time of darkness and declension they became covetous and withheld their tithes or tenths, in consequence of which God charged them with robbery, and pronounced upon them a curse. And is the obligation to give any less under the New Testament dispensation? Surely we have received more than they. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." One of the first fruits of the great revival on the day of Pentecost was a marvelous increase of liberality on the part of the Christians. They sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had need," and a little later on we read that "as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the Apostles' feet?" Had the spirit of liberality continued the knowledge of the Lord would long ere this have "filled the earth as the waters cover the sea." The Saviour enjoined liberality both by precept and example and assured his disciples that it was "more blessed to give than to receive." The apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians advises the idle to go to work, and to what end? Hear him. "Let him labor working with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth." He also enjoins systematic beneficence 1 Cor. 16: 2. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by in store as God has prospered him."

III. Providence teaches it. What would be our condition without the bounties of God's providence? Some thoughtless beings say, "My own skill, diligence and strength have procured for me the blessings I enjoy," and often act as though they were entirely independent of God's providence, the directors of their own fortunes, and the arbiters of their own destiny. Nebuchadnezzar was very independent when he strutted in his parlor and exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded for the house of my kingdom and the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" but he was soon stripped of all and driven from men, and then he learned that the Most High "doeth according to His will among the armies of heaven and inhabitants of earth." An important lesson. But, alas! man is slow to learn how entirely dependent he is upon Him who governs the fields and the clouds, the ships, the fish, the flocks, the workshops and the markets, as well as the nations, the earth and the planets. We are only the recipients of his bounty, and if he demands the return of a portion of that which He is freely bestowing upon us, it is a small service in return for so much love.

IV. Grace teaches it. God has manifested his love towards us by giving in the first place the unspeakable gift of His only Begotten Son, and if "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8: 32. He has given us the gospel which, for some reason, has until now been withheld from millions of our race. He has given us His Spirit, without whom the Bible would be a sealed book, and we would never understand our condition or our need. He has given us His servants to proclaim with loving voice the glad tidings of great joy, and there are multitudes who can appreciate this boon and say with Isaiah, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth." And Christian, what value do you set upon that Hope which is "an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil?" and the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" Oh! is it not surprising that we who have received countless manifestations of His love in the gifts of Nature, Providence, and especially of Grace, should even find it in our heart to withhold the portion of carnal things which He demands for the advancement of His kingdom and the welfare of humanity. In view of all His bounty we ought to be able to sing from the heart, with Dr. Watts:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Let us consider in the second place the benefit of Liberality.

I. To the giver. The apostle Paul in commending the Philippians for their generosity to him personally, speaks as though they were to derive the greatest benefit from their own beneficence. He says, chap. 4: 17: "Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." And is not this principle of reflex benefit in exact accord with the statement of our Lord, who said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Solomon in Prov. 3: 9, 10, gives a precept and promise. The former is, "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase," and the promise is, "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Will this promise be literally fulfilled? I hope not. A literal fulfilment might be a curse rather than a blessing. "Plenty" and "wine" are figures denoting ample supplies of all that is needful. The best commentary upon the passage is to be found in Phil. 4: 19. Paul is here assuring the friends who had ministered to his necessity that they will be no losers by their liberality. He says: "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." I have seen in real life many illustrations of the fact stated by Solomon in Prov. 11: 24. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty," and also of the truth of the promises expressed in the following verse: "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." If the reward does not come in the form of material wealth, it will be in something that is infinitely better. "Bring ye all the tether into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me more herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Let it not be understood that this view of the case is presented as a motive to prompt to the exercise of liberality, but as an encouragement and comfort to those who are prompted by love to do or to suffer for His name. The religion of the Bible does not consist wholly in acts of devotion directly towards God, such as adoration, supplication, thanksgiving and praise; but mainly in what we are enabled to do for our fellow-creatures. "My goodness extendeth not to this," says David, "but to the saints that are on the earth." The highest commendation of the saints on the right hand of the Judge in the great day will be, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

"Their works of piety and love,
Performed through Christ their Lord,
Forever registered above,
Shall meet a sure reward."

II. To the Receiver. If you give bread to the hungry, or clothing to the naked, you may see the result and have the pleasing consciousness that that poor suffering creature has been benefitted by your beneficence. But you may not always be permitted to see the fruit of your liberality. You may sow the seed and it may bear fruit like the morning wheat, after many years, when your head is beneath the sod. You may sow here, the results may be seen by others in other lands. But what matters it so long as suffering humanity is comforted, and perishing sinners are saved. What abundant harvests have been already reaped in India from the liberality of British and American Christians. Thousands of converted heathen will praise God through all eternity for the streams of benevolence that are flowing across the oceans through the Foreign Mission channels. Thousands have been rescued from eternal death through the agency of the great Home Mission enterprise. But no mortal can estimate the amount of blessing now enjoyed in heaven and upon earth as the result under God of the work accomplished through Acadia College and our various denominational agencies. The Lord has undoubtedly set his seal of approval upon these efforts to extend the Redeemer's kingdom so that none need fear to invest largely. The history of the past, the aspect of the present, and the outlook for the future, based upon the promises of the eternal Word, give the assurance that every dollar thus invested will yield ample returns in glory to God and good to men.

Let us consider in the third place the extent of the obligation to give.

I. Who should give?

If there is a person who has received nothing from God or who literally possesses, nothing, he is exempted. The plea of poverty will not stand the test as a reasonable excuse for withholding the tithes unless that poverty means destitution. In enjoining this duty upon the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul is careful to individualize the members, saying, "Let *every one* of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." The appeal is not to churches as such, but to individual Christians, and no church member has a right to screen his selfishness behind the benefactions of a few who happen to be wealthy, and say, "We have done our duty." And is there any obligation resting upon the unconverted to sustain the operations of the church. Yes, verily. They are certainly more deeply indebted to these for the material benefits and social advantages which they are permitted to enjoy, than to the political and civil institutions whose claims they are willing to recognize. No sane man will deny that the civilization of Christianity is far superior to the best culture of heathenism, and that he is therefore under an obligation to support the former. Again, every unconverted man has children or other relatives and friends who are comforted and helped by the gospel which he does not yet appreciate, and he should be willing therefore to contribute for its support and extension. Certainly these are not God-like motives, and we would urge all unconverted persons to copy the example of the Macedonians, who, says the apostle, "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."

II. How much should each give?

God's measure is according to that a man hath and not according to that he hath not."—2 Cor. 8: 12. A Christian's liberality is not to be estimated by the amount which he gives, but by the proportion of his possessions and income. A rich man may give a thousand dollars and scarcely miss it out of his abundance, while a poor man gives one dollar, and it costs him considerable self-denial. Which of the two has contributed most liberally? According to the Saviour's estimate, the latter. That poor widow who put two mites into the treasury, contributed more than any of the rich men, because they gave of their abundance and had plenty left, but she gave all she had.

It is to be feared that very few amongst us have come up to the scriptural idea of giving conveyed by the word "sacrifices" with which "God is well pleased." Some will doubtless receive the commendation given to Mary concerning whom the Saviour said, "She hath done what she could," but to a large majority God must be saying as he said to the Jews, "Ye have robbed me in tithes and offerings." The money which is spent by professing Christians for tobacco and other luxuries which impair the health and cripple the energies, for jewels and other finery designed for mere ostentatious display, and a thousand things which neither increase the comfort, elevate the character, nor promote the usefulness of human beings, to say nothing of that which is hoarded up for heirs to quarrel over or be injured by, would multiply a thousand-fold all the religious and benevolent agencies now at work, and sustain them vigorously. Surely the standard of one dollar upon an average for every church member, for sustaining the various enterprises of our Convention is not a lofty one, and yet we come far short of it. In view of our shortcomings God has blessed us far more abundantly than we deserve. Let us ask him to forgive our delinquencies in the past and cause us "to abound in this grace also." Then shall we show to the world "the proof of our love."

A Touching Incident.

An English actress, passing along a street one day, heard singing. She looked in at an open door upon a little prayer-meeting, and caught the words—

"Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?"

She entered, listened awhile, and then went away; but the hymn went with her. She became a Christian, and determined to leave the stage; but the manager would not release her from fulfilling her engagement. The last night she played with unusual brilliancy, and at the close was called before the curtain. Her contract was discharged; she had no master now but Christ. Standing there with clasped hands and streaming eyes, she sang:

"Depth of mercy can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God his wrath forbear—
Me, the chief of sinners spare?"

The audience was melted by the pathetic confession and plea, and many sought the same mercy.

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A LETTER OF LAURA BRIDGMAN'S.

BY REV. J. H. EDWARDS.

In looking over an old note-book shortly after reading the news of Laura Bridgman's death, I came upon a letter written by her to a cousin many years ago. Its peculiarities of expression are interesting as indicating the mental methods of one who was cut off from all the ordinary mediums of perception and communication. But it shows still more strikingly the strong religious nature developed amid the silent solitude in which her soul dwelt with God for her chief companion. The story of her conversion, when she was still quite young, gives peculiar proof of the fact that the religious faculty is an innate possession.

Having lost in whole, or in good part, her sight, hearing, speech, taste and smell, at two years of age, she could not receive even the first elements of religious education till she had learned, under the indefatigable efforts of good Dr. Howe, to use the one remaining sense of touch in the communication of ideas. But her mind was active. If she learned less than most children, she thought more. One day she asked Dr. Howe this question: "Man has made houses and vessels, but who made the land and the sea?' She was told that God made all things, and what was said of His character made a deep impression upon her. She could not rest till her teacher had explained to her the great truths of revelation as to this wonderful Being and man's relation to Him. She accepted Him as her Father and Saviour in all the sincerity of her child-like heart. The fear of death had before this caused her much distress, but this now passed away. She henceforth looked forward with joyful anticipation to the time when she should drop all bodily infirmities, and with perfect faculties engage in the praise and service of her Maker in the heavenly world. Her denominational connection was with the Baptists. Her simple and devout faith united this sadly hampered but truly free soul to the fellowship of all who love and serve God. This old letter, written out of her darkness and solitude, to a dear friend, is full of a joyful faith often lacking to those in full possession of every sense.

"HANOVER, N. H., July 14, 1861.

"MY DEAREST COUSIN: God bless you! May the Lord abide in you forever and you in Him. God is your glory. He is always present with you. He is merciful and meek in your soul. Your soul magnify God and your spirit rejoice in God. This is a prayer for you. I received your very kind letter with joy yesterday. It is so awaking to my soul by acknowledging a religious evidence which you manifest to me concerning F. L—— and God. I pray and praise God day and night, and should be so glad to have a long time in your society. I am so sad to think of such a great affliction which you bear of the loss of you dear friends who have died. They are much happier with God and Christ and angels. You will meet them with a great rapture when you fly off. I have seen (*i. e.*, with her fingers) many bouquets of flowers with gratitude this lovely time."

The letter closes with expressions of love, messages to friends, and pious wishes. Verily the simple religion of the Bible brings blessings to all classes of minds without exception, and gives of its best to the unfortunate, whose life with out it would not be worth living. What would positivism or agnosticism have had of comfort or of hope for Laura Bridgman?

The Holy Spirit Revealing Sin.

We may become familiar with all that the Scriptures teach concerning sin. But this intellectual knowledge alone is insufficient. There is the invisible Power, and only one, through whom such knowledge leads us to conviction and salvation. The Holy Spirit alone can unveil the soul's secret defilement and make the Scriptures "sharper than any two-edged sword." This work of the Holy Spirit within us is liable through many causes to be arrested. Our inattention to His hourly monitions limits the measure of His gracious power. Our lack of loyalty to Christ under all circumstances secretly grieves Him. Our disregard of personal vows made in private, or before the altar of the church, obstructs His work within our souls. The yielding, at certain times, to self-exaltation while engaged in Christian service, or, at other times, to spiritual indifference and sloth in that service, impedes him in his office of revealing the depth and turpitude of sin. In these, and in many other ways, we wilfully resist the only power that can show us at once the purity of God's law and the moral obliquity of our depraved natures. O, as we value the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, our guide and comforter, let us gird ourselves anew in watchfulness and prayer. While He is so ready to work in us, He is, nevertheless, easily grieved. His saving grace is accomplished in the heart only when it yields its full concurrence.

What is the proper method of enforcing the Scripture doctrine of sin upon others? One answer, and only one, can be given: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Man may speak to the outward ear, but He only can unlock the secret chambers of the soul, and transmit the piercing light of truth through every dark avenue. Whenever we seek, therefore, to show sinners the nature and heinousness of sin, we should rely upon the Holy Spirit to make our appeals effective, at the very moment we are uttering them. Says Dr. Candlish, the eminent Scotch divine, "I have the assurance that, when I am bearing witness concerning sin, the Spirit is working in their hearts, and working supernaturally.

Here is the cure of our faint-heartedness in the Master's service. Is the field we occupy hard and unpromising? Do the burning tears fall over our face, as we despondingly cry, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" O let us never despair. Think how courageous we should be, even in the most trying obstacles, since we have an omnipotent power attendant upon our finite utterances. He it is that can soften the heart and break down prejudices, even before we speak. He can reproduce our words long after we have disappeared from earthly sight; and can give to these words, many years afterward, an awful weight for conviction of sin. We are sure that the church is not yet half awake to behold the possibilities of truth, when proclaimed in the power of the Holy Ghost. While we speak to sinners, we should cultivate the habit of saying, "Holy spirit, *now* thou art present, *now* thou art sealing this word upon the conscience, *now* thou art removing the scales from these darkened minds." Such faith in the Holy Ghost not only honors him, but also the Father and the Son, from whom the Holy Ghost proceedeth.—*N. Y. Observer.*

— One ground for belief in future retribution is found in the relation between character and destiny. Habit tends to fixity, and this fixity of habit becomes character. Character is the distinctive mark which thought and act make upon the soul. Character is the sum of qualities which make the man; character is the man. Character tends to become eternal. This is a solemn thought. There is a moral gravitation as truly as there is a natural gravitation. Like seeks like. In Acts 4: 23 we read of Peter and John, "And being let go, they went to their own company." Here is an illustration of a great law. Let a group of men loose on the confines of this life, and they will go to their own company. In Acts 1: 25, it is said of Judas that he fell by transgression from his ministry and apostleship, "that he might go to his own place." Every man will go to his own place. Future punishment is not so much an external infliction as it is an inward condition. You cannot punish an innocent man; this the Omnipotent God cannot do. Put a man who loves God anywhere, and he will have something of heaven; put a man who hates God anywhere, and he will have much of hell. Empty hell to-day into heaven, and it would not be heaven to those thus introduced. Milton's Satan was right, when he said, "Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell." Men must have heaven within them, here and now, else they will never be in heaven hereafter. Men go into hell hereafter, because hell has already gone into them here. God sends no man into perdition. The election of God is unto life; the election of death is voluntarily made by men. Hell was prepared, not for men, but for the devil and his angels. We say it deliberately, no man will ever go to hell but the man who, in his deepest nature, wishes to go, who is determined to go, who has elected to go. Analyze a man's deepest choices, and you can tell whither he is going. If he selects a course of life, whose end is death, he selects hell as the inevitable goal of such a life. If a man persists in living in sin, God cannot keep him out of perdition. When the end comes that man goes downward, as certainly as the man who loves God goes upward. God cannot, in harmony with his own laws of being, keep a man who loves Him out of heaven. God is not arbitrary, fickle and capricious. He will not violate the laws according to which he has created us. Christ will not break down the heart's door. If we admit Him he will sup with us; if not, He will leave us. To reject Christ, to trample on truth, to live in sin and for Satan—this is hell, here and now. Such a life at the last will have its full reward with the devil and his angels. These principles have their relation to the future of the heathen who have not heard of Christ; of them we shall speak in a later paragraph.—*Dr. McArthur, in Christian Inquirer.*

Tobacco Chewers Among Women.

A well known physician, while walking down the street with a friend, remarked, a patient of mine lives in that house who is dying—an idolized wife—beyond all help, and tobacco chewing has killed her. Why, Doctor! what do you mean? I mean this: her husband is literally steeped in tobacco juice, and the insensible perspiration from his body has become so saturated with nicotine as to be a deadly poison. His wife, before I was called, had absorbed enough of the poison so that no human power can save her; and even he will, I believe, end his days in torture from some form of skin disease. The skin is really the most wonderful and important organ of the human body. Night and day, every hour of our lives, it is filtering out from the blood useless or poisoned debris. If it stopped work even for twenty-four hours in this or any case, death would ensue. You can imagine, then, what it means for a delicate, sensitive skinned woman to sleep in a warm bed night after night with an inveterate tobacco chewer. The skin and mucous membrane of some persons is much more sensitive than others. A person who in summer is subject to hay fever, tanned or burned skin, in winter to colds, bronchitis, chapped hands, or chilblains, ought always (whether at home or travelling) to keep a bottle of Johnson's Anodyne Liniment near at hand. Dilute the liniment with water and gently bathe, or moisten a cloth with it and lay upon the irritated skin if very sensitive; then wash it clean in the morning with Castile soap and water. If a person who takes cold quickly, or is predisposed to bronchitis or catarrh, or exposed to any poison, irritating to the skin or mucous surfaces, which might tend to cause consumption will every night, before retiring, bathe the chest and throat with Johnson's Anodyne Liniment and, before dressing in the morning, rub the whole body smartly with a coarse towel, slightly dampened, and then wipe dry, we believe they never would have pulmonary troubles, or disease from defective working of the skin. I. S. Johnson & Co., Boston, Mass., will send a pamphlet, free, describing other uses for this old household remedy, now eighty years old.

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